

It All Started with a 15-Minute Walk

Reality

On July 2, 2003, I found myself once again sitting on my living room couch with the TV on, feeling very tired, disillusioned with life and disconnected. I was pondering a discussion I had earlier that day with my spouse on "happiness". The sad thing was, I wasn't sure what really made me happy anymore. Somewhere along the way, I got lost in my busy life of mother, wife, employee, teacher, student, daughter etc. And I always put the needs of others ahead of my own.

The power to change

I've struggled my whole life with obesity, starting millions of diets in order to lose weight for a family wedding or an upcoming vacation, and I always failed miserably. On this day, it occurred to me that perhaps the way I had gone about losing weight was a failure; but *I was not a failure*. I am a competent, knowledgeable, and kind-hearted woman, who believed that I just needed to do things differently. *And I firmly believe that I have the power to make changes in my life, so I can be happier and healthier.*

Prioritize!

This is the day my priorities changed. I realized that it is my responsibility to be happy and healthy, so I got off the couch and went for a fifteen-minute walk. I was out-of-shape and breathless. But, instead of being critical and overwhelmed by it, I told myself, "Good job. Tomorrow I'll go sixteen minutes!"



My NEW #1 priority in life became MY health and happiness.

Lifestyle changes - reprogram one small step at a time

After two weeks of walking, I felt more energized, and began to feel good about myself. It was now time to re-evaluate my relationship with food. I had developed poor eating habits over the years, and my weight was over 300 pounds. I had been on so many diets in my life, and it was clear to me that I lacked an understanding of when I ate, why I would eat certain foods, what I was eating, and also the volume of food/calories I would consume in a day. I started a food journal, so I could be very specific in developing a plan to eat healthier. I decide to keep it simple, and I identified four new food habits I would implement on a weekly basis. These are the four changes:

1) Drinking water!

In the first week of my new eating habits, I concentrated on drinking more water. I was getting good exercise, and I found myself thirsty. I eliminated soda pop and chose water. I made a habit of grabbing my water bottle, and drinking water throughout the day. I noticed that this helped me eat less.

2) No eating after 8:00 PM.

The second week, I stopped late night eating. My food choices were usually high in fat, calorie dense, and lacked nutritional value. Also they were comfort foods; not related to true hunger. Late night eating had to go!

3) Portion control.

The third week, I needed to RELEARN what was a normal portion/serving size. I used a deck of cards to estimate a serving size. It was easy to do, and a very visual way to see a normal serving.

4) Eliminating fast foods.

By week four, I looked at my food choices and realized I needed to plan my meals, and not to eat on the run. Fast foods, in general, are loaded with fat and packed with calories. One of my most difficult changes came when I decided not to eat fast foods. They are so appealing and so easy to get.

Instead, I just decided to look at food as energy or fuel for my body, and I knew that better choices were fruits, vegetables, baked or broiled fish or chicken. I started a 'favorite food' list that included foods that were nutritious and foods that I liked. I then felt that I had a variety of healthy food choices that were great for my new energized body.

What amazed me was that it did not take long for my taste buds to adjust to my new way of eating, and that I was truly *satisfied*. For special occasions, if I wanted dessert or something I normally wouldn't eat, I developed a 'three bite' rule. The first three bites taste great, and then it just doesn't get better, so I stop after three bites.

A new me! I have lost 135 pounds. That is ten dress sizes, from size 32 to size 12, and 72 inches of fat gone from my body!



***** My health:**

When I started my exercise program in 2003, I had a complete physical exam with my doctor. In less than one year, in addition to the weight loss, OTHER BENEFITS to my body included:

✦ Blood pressure: 144/88 . . . Now: 100/70

✦ Resting pulse: 80 . . . Now: 40

✦ Cholesterol total: 180 . . . Now: 160

My risk for diabetes or cardiovascular disease: High . . . Now: Low

***** My fitness goals:**

I went from walking 15-minutes to joining a running club. On October 31st, 2004, I ran my FIRST marathon (26.2 miles). I now enjoy weight lifting, kickboxing classes, biking and so many other activities. And I am currently training for a triathlon. My physical activity used to be none existent, but NOW I AVERAGE 1.5 HOURS DAILY.

***** Happiness:**

I like roller coasters, painting my toe nails, being IN pictures, going to the beach, jumping on the trampoline with my children, and so many other things that I didn't realize before. My whole life is better. I no longer am a spectator, but a participant in life! We are meant to move and to live life to its fullest!

Because you are worth it The journey can begin for you too, because it all starts with a commitment to prioritize your health and happiness, the desire to reprogram some old thought patterns, and the willingness to take your first steps today.

**It all started for me with a 15-minute walk,
and I just stuck to it!**

